

Παπαδάκη Ελένη-Στεφανάκη Πηνελόπη

Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο Ηρακλείου

elenippdk@yahoo.com, pstefanaki@gmail.com

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An interdisciplinary analytical approach to the iconographic examination of minoan frescos. The so-called "fresco of the Goddess" from Aghia Triada as a case study.

ABSTRACT

The so-called 'Fresco of the Goddess' from the minoan villa of Aghia Triada (LM IA–LM IB), found in the excavations of F. Halbherr in 1902, belongs to the most problematic wall paintings of the Cretan Bronze Age, due to the poor state of preservation, caused by a severe fire damage of the villa.

As the past reconstructions were incomplete and many of the depicted elements, until recently, were still difficult to be identified, it was decided to proceed in the re-examination of the burnt painting surface, integrating modern and traditional techniques in a new, interdisciplinary analytical approach.

The painted surface of the fresco was examined using a mobile Spectral Imaging System, while a high resolution microscope was used by the conservators throughout the cleaning process. Moreover, draft overlay drawings made in a tracing transparent film that turned later to digital drawings in scale, provided valuable information in the identification of some new pictorial elements. The correlation of well preserved fragments and the pre-existing knowledge of the minoan iconographic program contributed to a new reconstruction of the fresco.

Overall, the combination of different analytical methods and the related detailed documentation in the process of the re-examination of the minoan burnt fresco provided important insights in the study of minoan iconography and furthermore in our knowledge about minoan civilization.